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STATE FOR WHA/BSC, WHA/AND, INR

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CI](#) [VZ](#)
SUBJECT: NEW CHILEAN AMBASSADOR TO VENEZUELA

Classified By: Ambassador Craig A. Kelly. Reasons: 1.4 (b and d).

11. (U) The Chilean press reported on May 23 that the Venezuelan government had extended agreement to Claudio Huepe, Chile's ambassador-designate to Venezuela. Huepe, a member of Chile's centrist Christian Democrat party and a government spokesman under former President Lagos (2000-02), lived in Venezuela for five of his eleven years in exile (1980-84) during the Pinochet era. There, he worked as a UN advisor to the Venezuelan Planning Ministry and the National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research, according to past Embassy reporting. Huepe is not a career diplomat and has not previously served as an ambassador. His experience in Venezuela, including relations with members of the Chavez government (including Jorge Giordani) and the Venezuelan opposition, were factors in his appointment, according to press reports.

12. (C) Outgoing Christian Democrat party international relations director Tomas Jocelyn-Holt characterized Huepe to Poloff on May 23 as "pro Chavez." He said that Foreign Minister Foxley had appointed Huepe because of his personal relationship with Foxley (who is also a Christian Democrat), Huepe's past experience in Venezuela, and his relations with members of the Chavez administration. Jocelyn-Holt said he was unaware of any business experience (e.g., energy) that Huepe might possess that might also have qualified him for the position. (Note: Because Jocelyn-Holt is partially disgruntled that he did not get the position in the administration he had hoped for after working on Bachelet's campaign, we take his comments about Huepe and Venezuela with a grain of salt. End note.)

13. (U) Bio note: Huepe was born in 1939. He received a degree in civil engineering from Chile's Catholic University, and a master's degree in economic development from Williams College. During the government of Eduardo Frei Montalva, Huepe served as governor of Arauco province before being elected deputy in 1969. He was re-elected to Congress in 1973, but following the military coup was detained for three months. In 1975, he went into exile, first to the United Kingdom and then to Venezuela. In 1984, he returned to Chile and emerged as a leader of the Democratic Alliance, a coalition of political parties that led the opposition to the Pinochet government. Huepe also served as vice president of the Christian Democrat party during this time. In 1989, Huepe was elected a deputy in Congress. He served as deputy minister under former President Frei from 1997-2000, and as Lagos' first spokesman from 2000-2002. Huepe is married and has three children.

KELLY